



May 14, 2012

Alan I. Leshner  
Chief Executive Officer and  
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The Honorable Harry Reid  
Senate Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Minority Leader McConnell:

On behalf of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), the world's largest general scientific organization, I write to you in strong support of the federal research and development budget of the National Science Foundation (NSF). NSF is unique among federal agencies in that it supports all disciplines in a balanced portfolio that uses the scientific peer review system as the foundation for awarding research grants based on merit.

The House of Representatives recently passed an amendment seeking to eliminate NSF spending on important political science research. I would like to draw your attention to a letter signed last year by 149 scientific societies that strongly opposes attempts to eliminate or substantially reduce funding for specific areas of science, such as social, behavioral, and economic (SBE) sciences ([http://www.aaas.org/gr/docs/11-07-11nsf\\_letter.pdf](http://www.aaas.org/gr/docs/11-07-11nsf_letter.pdf)).

NSF SBE political science research grants have contributed to important research on democratization, impacts of immigration, radicalization and terrorism, disaster response, and voting behavior. Another example is research on the notion of the commons which won Dr. Elinor Ostrom a Nobel Prize in Economics for her work on "economic governance" and on how common resources could be managed by the groups that utilize it.

I urge you to protect the integrity of the scientific enterprise by ensuring that the NSF and its independent scientific panels determine where the best scientific opportunities are, including in the social, behavioral, and economic sciences. We at AAAS stand ready to work with you.

Sincerely,

Alan I. Leshner

cc: U.S. Senate